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ABSTRACT
This paper argues that the retort 'easy for you to say' is a complaint about the target's standing, but that it invokes a standing norm that is unjustified. Moreover, I argue that in many cases the person for whom it is 'easy to say' *should* speak.

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She made the cleverest people quite ashamed,
And even the good with inward envy groan,
Finding themselves so very much exceeded,
In their own way by all the things that she did.
Lord Byron, *Don Juan*, Canto I

1. Introduction

Zadie Smith, brilliant and successful author, is by society's standards beautiful. Speaking at the 2017 Edinburgh International Literary Festival, Smith told her audience that she had recently instituted a new house rule. Smith noticed that her daughter, age seven, was spending more and more time in getting ready before leaving the house—not time in reading or drawing or playing games—but time in front of the mirror and fussing over clothes. This upset Smith. It especially upset her when she compared her daughter's routine to her son's. Her son was ready in minutes and seemed to give little thought to his appearance. She pointed this out to her daughter: 'I explained it to her in these terms: you are wasting time, your brother is not going to waste any time doing this,' Smith said. 'Every day of his life he will put a shirt on, he's out the door and he doesn't give a shit if you waste an hour and a half doing your make-up' [Branch 2017]. Fed up, she established the new rule. Everyone gets 15 minutes to get ready. No more. What Smith said after she finished her story is contested. But what does seem to be generally agreed is that Smith made critical remarks about make-up and the influence that make-up and the beauty industry have on young girls and women.

Her comments, whatever their exact wording, did not go unnoticed. Smith received many criticisms—criticism from left-leaning and feminist-friendly commentators and venues like *Jezebel* and *Bustle*, and on the Twittersphere, more generally [Borovic 2017;

Rebolini 2017]. There wasn't a universal story of backlash and upset. Many of the comments, however, fixated on Smith's traditional beauty and went something like this: 'Zadie Smith, you are a conventionally beautiful woman. You don't get what it is like for us women who don't fit society's beauty norms. You don't 'need' make-up to fit the mould.' In other words, 'Easy for you to say, Zadie Smith.'

Notice that these sorts of replies are not directed at the substance of what Smith said.[1] Rather they target *Smith* as the person who said what she said. Not that it shouldn't have been said; rather, it's that *she* should not have been the one to say it. This negative reaction to Smith gives the clear impression of being a criticism about standing. Her critics seem to be making an objection to her in the following form: the particular thing that you want to say or have said is *easy* for *you* to say, and thus *you* cannot say it.

At first gleaning, 'easy for you to say' seems to mean that the target of the criticism makes no sacrifice in following their own advice. It is easy for them to say, because it costs them nothing to behave in the way that they have desiderated. The critics are implying that this easiness disqualifies Smith from commenting. But I will argue that the easy norm is not a justified standing norm.[2] Moreover, I will argue that, regardless of whether I'm right about this, the fact that something is easy for one to say is actually a reason for them to say it. If, contrary to my argument, the easy norm is a justified standing norm, it follows that easiness *both* disqualifies someone from speaking *and* at the same time provides a reason for them to speak.

2. Moral Discourse and Standing

Families, partners, friends, colleagues, communities, and nations need to be able to communicate effectively about matters of moral importance. This is necessary for any possibility of peace, harmony, and justice. But moral discourse can be difficult to do correctly. And we need to be attentive to the particular ways that moral discourse can go wrong. It can go wrong because we do not have the facts right, because we lie or deliberately mislead each other, because we grandstand,[3] because we are mean, because we are petty, because we are arrogant, and so on. Moral discourse can also, arguably, go awry because the wrong people are speaking on a particular moral question. Often, worries about the wrong people talking are fleshed out in academic discourse as questions about standing. G.A. Cohen famously asked, 'Who can condemn the terrorists?' [2006]. This paper participates in that tradition of thinking about questions of standing and norms of moral discourse. Other authors have examined the standing of the hypocrite and the meddler, among others, and many (although not all) have found those persons to lack standing.[4] Here I look at the standing of a new speaker, the 'easy' speaker.

[1] Some of the other criticisms were directed at the substance: some thought that Smith failed to appreciate the artistic talent required and others thought that she ignored its therapeutic benefits. Importantly, these types of replies reject blameworthiness, and so deny that anyone, not just Smith, can blame make-up users.

[2] To be clear, I am not interested in defending Smith full stop or the entirety of her remarks. My argument is not intended to show that she had standing. Rather, it aims to show only that Smith didn't lose standing in virtue of her ease in speaking.

[3] On grandstanding, see Tosi and Warmke [2016].

[4] For literature that focuses on what the hypocrite and/or meddler does wrong, see Cohen [2006], Wallace [2010], Herstein [2017], Isserow and Klein [2017], Fritz and Miller [2018], Edwards [2019], and Todd [2019]. Conversely, Bell [2013] argues that neither the hypocrite nor the meddler loses standing. Similarly, Dover [2019] argues that those who fail to practice what they preach should not lose standing to engage in moral criticism.

Questions about standing are, roughly, about which persons stand in the correct position to perform some act or make some judgment of another's action. Such questions arise in law, in philosophy, and in everyday situations. The law asks: who has the standing to bring a constitutional challenge? Moral philosophers ask: who is in a position to blame or forgive? A person may reply to their judgmental friend: 'Look who's talking. Are you really in any position to criticize me?' These issues of standing are separate questions from that of whether the challenge has merit, that of whether the action is blameworthy or forgivable, or that of whether the friend's criticism is valid. Questions about standing are not concerned directly with such matters; their direct concern is with the speaker's right to speak to such matters. The point of questions about standing is that not just anyone can bring the claim, or blame, or forgive, or criticize. This paper is focused on standing to blame and criticize. When criticisms of standing are levelled at someone who blames or criticizes, these are not ways of rejecting blameworthiness; rather, they are attempts to reject the blamer as the one who gets to do the blaming or criticizing.

There are various approaches to standing. One view is that those without standing lack the right or entitlement to speak (for instance, Todd [2019]). Call this *the entitlement view*. Another view claims that those without standing fail to perform the relevant speech act that they intend.[5] Call this *the failure view*. Consider the example of a hypocritical would-be blamer. The entitlement view says that she's not entitled to blame. The failure view says that she doesn't actually blame. It does not matter, for present purposes, which view of standing is correct. The entitlement view of standing is preferably simpler, and the paper proceeds as though that view is correct. All that is said here, however, should apply equally to the failure view. It is worth pointing out that I am interested in a rather everyday sense of standing—the sense expressed when the public or 'an average Jane' thinks that person *x* shouldn't be the one talking. The everyday sense of standing has more affinity with the entitlement view. You don't have the right to talk to me about that.

3. What's Easy?

This section has two main goals: (1) explain in what sense it is *easy* for the easy speaker to say whatever they are going to say; and (2) show that the easy norm can't be justified because (a) it cannot be assimilated to already-theorized norms, and hence cannot inherit whatever justification they have; and (b) two prominent and promising strategies for justifying other standing norms do not justify the easy norm as a *sui generis* standing norm.

Turning to the first task, a promising intuitive hypothesis is that, by 'easy for you to say', we mean that it's easy to say because whether the relevant norm is embraced or rejected has little or no direct (negative) consequences for the speaker. To see this, let's look to the Titans volleyball team.[6]

In volleyball, height is an advantage. On a competitive volleyball team, most players will be taller than the average person. Imagine that the Titans volleyball team is looking for a quick way to make cuts after the first try-out. They use this criterion: if a player

[5] See Cohen [2006] (but he also talks in entitlement terms) and Isserow and Klein [2017].
[6] The volleyball example is less complicated than the Smith case, because structures of dominance and oppression are assumed not to exist.

cannot jump and touch their forearm to the top of the net's tape, they do not make it to the next round of try-outs. For brevity, let's call this *the vertical rule*.

The height culture is especially strong on the Titans team. The team is one in which tall players are actively preferred to the detriment of shorter players and of the team overall. There is a sense among some of the players that the vertical rule is not the best rule for the team and that the Titans should abandon the rule. Are either the tall players or the short players disqualified from saying it because of their relative ease or difficulty in saying it? Who has the standing to voice this new way forward for the team?

At first blush, there are at least two sorts of players that could advocate the rejection of the vertical rule—tall players or short players. And there are a few different ways in which we might understand the ease or difficulty with respect to voicing rejection of the vertical rule. The acceptance and use of the rule are easy, in some sense, for tall players to endorse. They are more likely to be able to touch the top of the net, and so it is easy for them to endorse the rule because it works to their benefit. It is not easy for a short person to endorse the vertical rule, because that rule makes it harder for them to make the team. But it is also not easy for them to openly oppose it: they may be accused of sour grapes.

On the other hand, the tall players won't be accused of being self-interested if they oppose the vertical rule, and their privilege generally on the team makes it easier for them to speak (and to be heard). But rejecting the rule might be difficult for tall players, because they might lose some of the advantage that they get from being tall. Their desire to remain on the team might make it more difficult to speak up, even if they actually endorse the new norm. This sense of 'easy' tracks the consequences of openly expressing one's opposition. But I don't think that this is the sense of 'easy' that we mean to express when we level the 'easy' criticism.

To see this more clearly, let's consider a different player, the one for whom it is easy in the particular sense of 'easy' that is our focus. This is the star player, the player who will clearly make the team if the athletes are assessed on the vertical rule, height, serving percentage, points scored, and so on. Let's call her Marianne. MVP of the Titans, she speaks up, saying to her coaches and fellow teammates 'We should get rid of the vertical rule', and she is critical of those players reluctant to embrace the change. We can easily imagine some of the tall players, perhaps those anxious about their ability to make the team if the vertical rule is nixed, criticizing Marianne with the 'easy' charge. And it is easy for her, not because abandoning the vertical rule benefits her, but because she will make the team no matter what. Marianne is the one for whom it is easiest to speak for the new norm—primarily because her undeniable volleyball skills protect her from being cut from the team (she doesn't need a try-out rule that stacks the deck in her favour). That means that it does not matter for Marianne's spot on the team whether or not the vertical norm is rejected. And this is the sense of 'easiness' that I think we mean to track with the 'easy' retort—namely, that the consequences of the norm don't affect the person who is speaking.

That takes us to this section's second aim. Why might Marianne's ease in speaking out against the vertical norm disqualify her from doing so? It seems to be because the consequences don't affect her in the right way. She doesn't have enough at stake. As noted earlier, philosophers have already enumerated some standing criteria, arguing that if one doesn't meet them then one does not have standing. Perhaps the 'easy' standing complaint is best understood as a version of one of those, and thus can be

justified via one of those norms. Philosophers suggest that someone may lose standing to blame[7] for these reasons: (1) one's blame would be hypocritical; (2) one is involved in the person's wrongdoing; and (3) the person's wrongdoing is none of one's business.

At first glance, it seems that the 'none of one's business' criterion is the closest to the sentiment of the 'easy' charge. Marianne isn't directly affected by the consequences of the norm, because she will make the team no matter what, and so one might think that it's none of her business whether or not the Titans employ or reject the vertical rule. But surely it is Marianne's business what rules the team uses to cut players: after all, she is on the team. The quality of the other players affects the team's success and Marianne's ability to perform well. 'Mind your own business' might be an appropriate reply to a busybody who is not on the team or even to a school donor who doesn't know anything about volleyball, but it seems a misguided thing to say to Marianne. The business criterion is normally cashed out as a worry about the criticizer and the criticized not being in the right sort of relationship with each other [Bell 2013; Edwards 2019]. A meddler, by definition, does not have the right relationship to the wrongdoer, and so does not have standing to blame, but Marianne clearly stands in the right sort of relationship to her fellow teammates and coaches to be able to criticize them on the subject of volleyball or on how the team is trained. In contrast, she might not be in the right sort of relationship with her teammate to criticize that teammate's disrespect of their grandparent. So, the vertical rule is Marianne's business, but nevertheless it is still too easy for her to say; or so the worry seems to go.

Is it hypocritical of Marianne to advocate the rejection of the vertical rule? What exactly it is for someone to be hypocritical is tricky, but we tend to think that someone is a hypocrite if they say one thing and do another—when there is this mismatch. It is hard to see how its being easy for Marianne to speak for the new norm could make her a hypocrite. She doesn't say one thing ('reject the rule') and do another (making it very hard for the try-out rules to be changed, for example). She opposes the vertical rule and is a very good player. There is no mismatch. Does her overwhelming volleyball skill make it hypocritical for her to have an opinion on the criteria for making the team? I can't see how. Now, it might be that in previous seasons Marianne was a big proponent of the vertical rule because she was a less talented player and needed the advantage. In that case, her sudden change of heart seems fishy and evidence of a double standard. And so she might be a hypocrite, but notice that we need to have that extra bit of information for the hypocrisy charge to make sense. The 'easy' charge, on the other hand, makes sense without it. So, Marianne, as initially described, is not a hypocrite.

Closely related to the non-hypocrisy norm is the non-complicity norm. Perhaps Marianne was involved somehow in the acceptance of the vertical rule, and thus violates the non-complicity condition. Again, it is not clear how we could understand Marianne's ease in speaking out as incriminating her in being part of the problem that she wanted to change. Does the mere fact that she is an exceptional volleyball player make it the case that the team needed to use the vertical rule or was more likely to use the vertical rule? I struggle to see a sensible way of cashing out the 'easy' charge as a way of pointing to Marianne's own involvement with the vertical norm such that she would be disqualified from speaking.

[7] I am interested in more than just blame, but also criticism, advice, and so on. For a similarly broad discussion of standing beyond blame, see Bell [2013], Herstein [2017], and Dover [2019].

So, the 'easy' charge cannot straightforwardly be understood as being part of an already-articulated standing criterion. We therefore cannot rely on those norms for its justification. Moving to the second part of the second goal, I will now argue that the most promising ways of justifying it as a *sui generis* standing norm fail.

Here is one plausible way of understanding the rationale behind the 'easy' retort as a *sui generis* norm: we can only be criticized by those who have experienced (or could possibly experience) the same difficulties or who have been tempted by the same course of action as has tempted us. If this is a standing criterion then Marianne doesn't have standing, because she isn't tempted to endorse a potentially unfair try-out rule, like the vertical one, because she doesn't need to worry about having a rule that will work to her advantage. And the 'easy' speaker, more generally, doesn't have standing, according to this criterion, because their ease is what eliminates their potential to be tempted in the specific way at issue. Can such a standing norm be justified? Or is the retort simply evidence of our tendency to dislike opprobrium even when it's deserved?

Let's look at some generic strategies for justifying standing norms, and ask whether any of them can be used to justify the 'easy' norm. Patrick Todd offers a unified account of standing that argues that all persons who lack standing are those who are not committed to their proclamations of practice. Todd [2019] contends, for example, that the hypocrite's failure to live up to their own standards demonstrates that they aren't properly committed to those standards, and that this is why hypocrites don't have standing. And so, on his picture, in order to have standing, one needs to have sufficient commitment to what one is saying. Todd's unified theory of standing appeals to the value of commitment, but such a theory does not justify the easy norm. That's because its being easy for someone to say doesn't track their commitment in the same way as continued failure to live up to one's preached norms does. Indeed, in speaking out against a norm, the easy speaker demonstrates their commitment. That's why silence is often understood as complicity. The easy speaker is committed to what she says. So, Todd's theory does not justify the easy norm. In fact, his view, if correct, provides reason to think the standing norm is not justified. That's because Todd's theory explains the unity of the family of justified standing norms; but it does not apply to the easy norm. So, it provides us with reason to think that the easy norm does not belong to that family—in other words, that the easy norm is not a justified standing norm.

Other justifications of standing criteria are based on concerns for equality. For example, Wallace [2010] argues that the hypocrite doesn't have standing to blame, because they countenance their own moral failings but chastise others for theirs. In doing so, according to Wallace, the hypocrite denies the equal standing of persons —a fundamental moral principle. But one's ease in speaking doesn't imply a denial of the equality of persons. The easy speaker doesn't violate principles related to equality, simply in virtue of their ease in speaking.

I've considered two promising generic strategies for justifying standing norms, and argued that neither justifies the easy norm (understood as a *sui generis* standing norm). I've also considered whether the easy norm can be translated into the already articulated norms, and thereby inherit their justification. I have, however, demonstrated that it cannot. This does not deductively entail that the easy norm lacks justification.

But it creates a presumption in favour of that conclusion. The burden is now on my opponent to produce a justification.[8]

4. Return to Smith

I've argued that the easy norm is not a justified standing norm. I will now argue that, regardless of whether I'm right about that, the fact that something is easy for one to say is actually a reason for them to say it. If, contrary to what I've argued, the easy norm *is* a justified standing norm, it follows that such easiness *both* disqualifies someone from speaking (because they lack standing) *and* at the same time provides a reason for them to speak.

Let us reacquaint ourselves with the example: Smith is a conventionally attractive woman advocating that women reject beauty norms. Like being tall in volleyball, being a conventionally attractive woman brings with it many advantages. Women, in particular, seemingly cannot avoid having their looks be part of their capital. Moreover, advocating the rejection of beauty norms is a rebellious claim in our society. So, of whom is Zadie Smith the analogue? Is she the tall player, the short player, or Marianne, the superstar? Remember that the superstar is the player who will make the team, no matter what. Tall players lose whatever advantage they had in virtue of their height if the vertical rule is abandoned. With that in mind, you might think that Smith is the tall player (she is clearly not the short player). After all, she benefits from a world that gives advantages to those who are beautiful, and she would lose such an advantage in a world that didn't. But this is too quick, and is one of the instances in which the volleyball example and the real-world examples come apart. If the Titans reform their try-out criteria and drop the vertical rule, then *as soon as* they do it the tall players lose their advantage with respect to making the team. It is a rule that can be switched off or on, although there might be a lingering prejudice. Beauty norms are not like that. There is no rule that we can switch off and on. Progress, if we are to have any, will be slow. Thus, Smith is actually more like the superstar player: when she doesn't use make-up, she *still is* conventionally attractive. She makes the beautiful team, no matter what. It is easy for Smith to tell women to reject make-up, because she remains conventionally beautiful even without it: in other words, her rejection seemingly carries no costs for her at all. Indeed, this seems to have been part of the criticism levelled at her: easy for you to say, because you don't *need* make-up. So, Smith can easily reject it herself and call on us to do likewise. And, like Marianne, I think that she is in a good position, because of the easiness, to advocate against oppressive beauty ideals. Beauty norms should change, and Smith is doing her part (or at the very least she is doing something) to change them. Admittedly, she isn't going out of her way to be 'hideous' (as a way to undercut beauty norms and to normalize deviations from the ideal and variations in expression of appearance), but I am not sure that she is required to do so.[9]

I cannot see a plausible explanation why Smith should be barred from advocating the new norm just because it is easy for her to do so. So, while the 'easy' retort is

[8] Most of the standing criteria point to a wrong in the would-be blamer's moral record in making their case for lost standing. But the easy speaker's moral record is clean. This also lends support to my claim.

[9] Kathryn Pauly Morgan [1991] suggests that we should only use cosmetic surgery to make our noses bigger, our thighs fatter, and so on.

levelled in an attempt to take away standing, it fails to provide legitimate grounds for loss of standing. And thus it should not persuade an audience or hearer to ignore a speaker. In fact, because the easy speaker faces no costs, I actually think that she *should* say it.[10] That is, not only does she have standing to say it, but she seems, practically speaking, in a particularly good position to advocate the new norm. To put the point another way, if Smith remained silent then we could criticize her with 'but it's easy for you to say. And so you should say it!' (This is obviously a sense different from the way that it was actually used against Smith.) I suggested earlier that easiness can track the consequences of whether the norm is adopted/rejected, and also track easiness about the expression of one's endorsement—about the reaction of others to one's words, irrespective of whether the norm is adopted/rejected. While these are distinct types of easiness, in speaking they will often coincide. If the stakes for you personally are low with respect to the rejection or acceptance of a specific norm, it is likely that you have a privileged voice more generally, just as Smith does.[11] Her conventional beauty benefits her, and allows her to be heard more readily.

Notice that this analysis fits with how we tend to think about who should do what, given the respective costs. That is, if it is easier for Dorothy to do the right thing and more difficult for Rose, the relative ease speaks in favour of Dorothy doing it. And the difficulty makes Rose's inaction understandable, perhaps justified or excused. Consider the #metoo campaign. Its recent viral iteration was at first mainly participated in by famous wealthy women who were in a stronger position to deal with the public scrutiny than are many other women who face sexual harassment and abuse.[12] I point this out, not to underestimate either the cost for those women participating in the campaign or their courage, but rather to highlight that the women who have been most willing and able to come forward are those women who were already in significant positions of power. Such women face the lowest risk of stigmatization and censure, and have more resources to deal with stigmatization and censure, should it occur. It is *easier* for them to say it, and so, in some senses, we expect them to say it (including, in some respect, to say it for others for whom it is not so easy).[13]

5. An Epistemic Claim

A possible objection to what I have argued thus far is that I've mischaracterized the thrust of the easy complaint by interpreting it as one about standing. One might contend that it's more about the substance of what was said. So, instead of being a complaint that rejects a particular blamer, it is actually a way of rejecting blameworthiness or the criticism altogether. For the Smith case, that would mean something like 'the use of make-up isn't that bad', or, for the Marianne case, something like 'we don't need to change the vertical rule.'

The 'easy' retort might be a shorthand way to make an epistemic claim. On this picture, when someone uses the 'easy' reply, they're worried that the person in question has not done the calculations correctly or does not have access to all of the information

[10] This suggests that if, despite arguments here, the easy norm could be justified, then it might be the case that, all things considered, the easy speaker should speak, despite not having standing. And she should do so because it is easy for her.
[11] The easy speaker also will not be accused of being purely self-interested.
[12] Here I draw on ongoing work and discussions with Alexandra Whelan on privacy.
[13] Expectation might not be exactly the right sentiment, but something more than hope is.

relevant for making such a claim. So, in the case of Zadie Smith, it might mean something like this:

> Smith, you are a beautiful woman by standard beauty norms. Because of that, you don't know or fully appreciate all of the important and relevant costs that burden women who do not meet these norms. This means that, in doing the mathematics about whether women as a class should use make-up, you're more likely to have made a calculation mistake.[14] Thus, your criticism is mistaken.

This suggestion of miscalculation could be what the 'easy' remark is getting at. But there are a few reasons for thinking that isn't right. One reason is that I take it that many of Smith's critics are actually sympathetic with Smith's general contention and her worries about beauty norms and how they're oppressively applied to women. Lumping feminists together, I think that most would agree that how such norms play out in our world is bad and that it is especially bad for women. It is not just that they want to smash the patriarchy as much as Smith does; it is that they also agree with her specific tactics for smashing it. So, the critics' issue is not with Smith's mathematics. My second reason lies in the actual words that constitute the remark: easy for *you* to *say*. Not: what you say is *wrong*, or what you say is *too quick*, or a variation of that. I am not intending to put too much emphasis on the specific words, but I want to point out that we do have other retorts at the ready when we disagree with the substance of our opponents' claims. Furthermore, I suspect that, even if the audience knew that Smith had all of the information and had done the mathematics correctly, she still would have been met with the 'easy' criticism. Consider an eavesdropper who only overhears Smith's comments but doesn't know anything about Smith (doesn't know that she is attractive, successful, and so on).[15] Upon hearing Smith's critique, the eavesdropper might think about whether her claims have merit or not, but because they don't know anything about Smith they won't say or think to themselves 'easy for you to say.' Just as they won't say 'she's such a hypocrite', since they don't know who the speaker is. Thus, the 'easy' retort is about the speaker and their standing.

There is another version of epistemic complaint that aims not at Smith's mathematics, but rather at whether she is a reliable calculator.[16] That is, the easy complaint might mean that Smith is unreliable on the issue at hand (she may have reached the right answer, by luck or fluke). But, again, I don't think that this quite captures the easy complaint. Imagine that Smith had her doctorate in gender studies and was *the* expert on the effects on women of the beauty industry—and, what's more, that she understood, although perhaps would not fully experience herself, the costs of rejecting make-up. In this case we make her reliable, and so this epistemic version of the complaint doesn't make sense here; however, the standing complaint would.

In criticizing the epistemic interpretation of the 'easy' retort, I am not trying to establish that that interpretation is never what is going on when the 'easy' retort is levelled.[17] My aim is more modest. I intend to show that there are at least some cases where an epistemic interpretation isn't going to capture the whole picture.

[14] This is similar to claims in standpoint epistemology.
[15] Thanks to Guy Fletcher for this example.
[16] Thanks to an anonymous referee for this version of the epistemic complaint.
[17] Nor am I claiming that they are always entirely distinct. Some of our standing norms might be related to epistemic norms—for example, standing to do with expertise.

Seeing the 'easy' retort as one about standing is, I submit, familiar: the sentiment it expresses is one that we recognise and probably have felt.

6. What the 'Easy' Complaint Gets Right

So far, it seems that 'easy for you to say' is an empty accusation. But it is in thinking about the Smith example and other real-world examples that we find the kernel of something valuable to the 'easy' charge—namely, that 'it's easy for you to say' means that there is (probably) a better person to say it,[18] a person whose saying it is more meaningful. If we consider an example, we can get close to what I mean by 'more meaningful'. It is a sense that is familiar in our everyday lives. Imagine two friends, Seamus and Eden, who have a nasty fight. As a result, Seamus disinvites Eden to his thirtieth-birthday party. Nadia is good friends with both, and often plays peacekeeper when they fight. After some time has passed and tempers have cooled, Nadia helps Seamus to see that it was rash to un-invite Eden and that Seamus will regret it if Eden isn't at his party. Because Eden and Seamus haven't yet made-up, Seamus asks Nadia to let Eden know that he is invited and that Seamus wants him to be there. Even though Eden knows that Nadia often plays the go-between, and that Seamus wouldn't tell Nadia to pass on the re-invitation unless he really meant it, the re-invitation nevertheless would be more meaningful if it were to come from Seamus himself. It is this sense of 'meaningful' that I have in mind. Who the speaker is adds a little heft to what is being said. That is why it is better that the person who struggles under the norm speaks out against it. But that there is a better person to say it does not mean that you shouldn't say it, especially if we risk no one saying it. The invitation that comes from Seamus is more meaningful, but if he won't (because at present he's not ready to communicate with Eden directly) then it is still preferable that Nadia passes it along (rather than having no one say it). Returning to the Smith example, if part of what the 'easy' retort is getting at is that there are women for whom it is not so easy to reject make-up, I agree. I agree also that in some sense it would be better if those were the women criticizing and rejecting beauty norms. And I think that it would be better because it would be more meaningful, in the sense articulated just now. They are especially marginalized under compulsory beauty norms, and ignored if they speak up about most things. So, it is rebellious in many ways just for that person to demand to be heard and to speak on the issue. That rebellion itself challenges the *status quo* surrounding beauty norms, in addition to the actual content of what they are saying.

7. Who Should Say It?

There is no ideal person to criticize the beauty industry.[19] Although I think that it is more meaningful if someone who is considered unattractive speaks out against beauty norms, I understand why they might not: instead of various media outlets crying out that they are too beautiful to 'get' make-up, people would probably

[18] Better, at least according to one measure. It might also be more effective to have those who struggle under the norm speak out against it, but then again those with more privilege might be heard more.

[19] This discussion highlights a general tension between (i) standing norms on blame and (ii) the point of blame. See also Bell [2013], who argues that the aims of blame can be achieved by those commonly thought not to have standing.

humiliate and ridicule these women, accusing them of just not liking make-up because even those enhancements can't make them pretty.[20] Smith's fate doesn't seem so bad when compared to that. Smith, as a conventionally beautiful woman, is someone who can and should speak out. It is much riskier for non-conventionally-attractive women to push us to reject beauty norms, because they lack the privilege that accompanies beauty; but, as with the #metoo movement, Smith's actions might inspire others, including some who are less privileged.

In an illuminating contrast to Smith, consider Roxane Gay and what is easy for her to say. Gay, a writer, academic, and self-professed bad feminist,[21] is a fat woman.[22] She thinks that our world is cruel to, and unwelcoming of, her body and bodies like hers. She argues that this must change: she knows that people ought to be able to move about the world, literally and metaphorically, in a way that does not punish them for their size. And she is adamant that being loved by oneself and others should not, and does not, require thinness. When Gay proclaims that everyone should love their body, it is not easy for her to say.[23] Hers is the body that society tells us we ought to dislike, or to modify in an extreme makeover. Gay's acceptance and love of her body is rebellious. But it is a difficult stance for her to live by all of the time. Indeed, Gay has said that she wants to lose weight.[24] Because of this, she is accused of being fat-phobic and a hypocrite. The threat of losing standing is always close by, it seems.

The point to be taken from the Gay example is that it is always hard to say the rebellious thing: it's either too easy for you to say, or it's hard and one misstep and suddenly you're a hypocrite. Given that it is a lose–lose situation, I'm inclined to think that the person with more privilege (the Zadie Smiths of the world) should bear the burdens of the 'easy' charge, should that come her way.

Perhaps those in a position to speak more 'easily' should voice their criticisms differently than should those without as much privilege. In particular, perhaps they should be forthcoming or candid about their own ease and privilege. Smith might have been able to mitigate the 'easy' accusation by acknowledging that it is easy for her to say. This strategy might be a more, or a less, successful tactic for mollifying one's potential critics, depending on what it is, exactly, to which one is admitting. My guess is that it would not have been the best way for Smith to go. Imagine if she'd said 'I know that I am a beautiful woman, but our cultural obsession with westernized beauty norms and make-up is terrible.'[25] Think of the further abuse to which

[20] Consider what happened to Lindy West after she debated comedian Jim Norton about whether rape jokes were out of line. After the debate aired, West received slews of online attacks (including rape and death threats). As West wrote, 'detractors have been threatening to rape and kill me, telling me *I'm just bitter because I'm too fat to get raped,* and suggesting that the debate would have been better if it had just been Jim raping me' (my emphasis). See Travers [2013].

[21] She considers herself a bad feminist because she falls short of her own feminist ideals. She might also be accused of hypocrisy for this. See Gay [2014].

[22] Gay self-describes as fat. I understand that the term is loaded, especially loaded when used to describe women. I use it here, however, because I believe that the word is being reclaimed, much like the term 'slut'. It is not bad to be fat.

[23] It is not easy for her to say, both because the voices of people who are fat are marginalized and ignored and because the rejection of the 'love every body' norm has serious consequences for Gay. To be clear, I do not mean to comment exactly on how Gay feels about her body currently or at any specific time.

[24] See, for example, Gay [2017].

[25] There might be other ways for her to be candid, such as 'I know there is immense pressure on women to look a certain way and that it will be more difficult for some women to resist those pressures.' And perhaps that would be heard more welcomingly, although critics could still reply 'What do you know about how difficult it will be?'

she would have opened herself—the accusations of vanity (a mortal sin for women everywhere). Women have to be beautiful, and spend hundreds of dollars to do so, but must not act like they actually care about being beautiful. No doubt, she would have received a dissection of her looks, and a list of 'reasons' why she is actually not beautiful and in fact needs a lot more make-up or retouching, and so on. On the other hand, the employed friend who is giving advice about the job market to an unemployed friend might do well to flag that it is easy for them to say that a good job will arise.

We need to be careful about how we treat and use criticisms that target people's standing.[26] Attacks on standing skirt the substance of the debate, which can seem like a benefit to those wielding them, and to those who were the target of the original critique. I don't have to convince you, or others, that you're wrong about the substance of your claim or even directly engage with it. I can just point out that you aren't allowed to speak on the issue. It is much easier to call into question someone's standing than it is to engage with the issues and arguments in play. Critics of Smith who cast doubt on her standing urge people, at least implicitly, to ignore what she says without discussing or speaking to the important social issues that she has raised. Those critics don't have to say anything about the role that the beauty industry plays in the oppression of women, but nevertheless they influence and shape debate about that very subject. This is worrying.

Philosophers and non-philosophers alike have endorsed the critique of standing as a valid way of disarming opponents. Targeting standing can seem to be an attractive strategy in areas of debate where there is deep and divisive disagreement.[27] Where debates have become particularly partisan, and people are entrenched in their respective views, it can seem futile to persist in attempts to convince the other side that their position is wrong on its merits. The charge of easiness (and other standing complaints) provides another ground for critique. In the everyday, we tend to think that those who don't have standing can be ignored. And if the opportunity presents itself, we often try to induce others to ignore them as well. That is, we think that we don't have to listen to, or engage with, someone who lacks standing. And many philosophers theorizing about standing have agreed with our everyday approach. They argue that the fact that a person lacks standing changes the reply options available to a respondent. In this vein, James Edwards [2019] argues that, where one person lacks standing, the object of her criticism is not required to explain themselves or to respond to the substance of the criticism other than by pointing out that the former lacks the standing to blame them. Ori Herstein [2017] has argued that the respondent is entitled to deflect some of the reasons offered by the person who lacks standing,[28] and on other views the respondent is entitled to dismiss the hypocritical blamer entirely. As G.A. Cohen puts it, one way to silence our critics is to call into question their standing to criticize [2006: 7]. We needn't fixate on the details of these arguments. The point to emphasize is that the stakes are high for the standing of the 'easy' speaker and for the

For a recent example of an attempt to be forthcoming about her own privilege backfiring, see Ahsan [2020]. Actor and activist, Jameela Jamil, was accused of 'humble bragging' after acknowledging that her wealth allowed her access to better skincare, after people on social media praised her beautiful skin. The point is that context will determine whether candour will be appreciated.

[26] This discussion draws on O'Brien and Whelan [ms].

[27] See Shklar [1984], Runciman [2008], Isserow and Klein [2017], and Dover [2019].

[28] Herstein [2017] contends that, when someone lacks standing, their target has the option of dismissing the 'directed-reasons' offered.

public discussion of major social issues. Importantly, such attacks aim to silence without any engagement with the merits or demerits of the claim made. Most criticisms that focus on standing deflect attention away (sometimes deliberately) from serious and complex issues. Often, attacks on standing seem more focused on trivial point-scoring rather than sincere engagement with challenging and pressing issues. And they are convenient ways for wrongdoers to avoid having to answer for themselves.

It might be that there are some speakers who do not have standing, like the meddler or the hypocrite. But we need to be cautious about adding too hastily to the list of standing criteria, in part because of what it means for the person who doesn't have standing and for our moral discourse. I've argued here that 'non-easiness' is not a justified standing criterion. What does that mean about the fate of 'easy for you to say'? Should we endeavour to excise it from our arsenal of retorts? This is complicated. The reply gets some things right—in particular, that there is a better speaker. And often that is worth noting even if the better speaker won't or can't do the speaking, like less conventionally attractive women who fear ridicule and cruelty if they talk publicly about beauty. But the response gets some things wrong, too: it suggests that the 'easy' speaker shouldn't be speaking. Often, however, they are the only ones who are realistically in a good position to do the speaking. And if they don't speak, issues of injustice and wrongdoing might remain unaddressed.

8. Speaking for Others and Crowding Out

I have suggested that the Zadie Smiths of the world should speak up and advocate, and criticize pervasive and pernicious norms even though (perhaps because) it's easy for them to do so. Part of my reasoning behind this is that *someone* should do the criticizing. A worry about this is that if we encourage the Smiths of the world to do all of the speaking, their voices will crowd out those of the more marginalized, including some of the voices that I've suggested would be better speakers. A stronger version of this worry is that my argument licenses others speaking on behalf of those whom they should not pretend to represent. My argument does not lead to either of these conclusions. Those more privileged need to be attentive to the voices that are often less heard, and need to listen for those voices and work to make room for them in the public square. All of what I have said here is compatible with the value of representation and diversity of voices. My arguments do not endorse condescension, preaching, or shaming; rather, they endorse thoughtful consideration and reflection.

9. Conclusion

There is a growing body of literature on the standing of various speakers such as the hypocrite and the meddler. This paper examined the standing of a new speaker, the 'easy' speaker. I argued that the retort 'easy for you to say' is a complaint about the target's standing, but that it invokes a standing norm that is unjustified. Moreover, in many cases the person for whom it is easy to say should speak. I also emphasized that the stakes for getting standing right are high: if one doesn't have standing, one can be dismissed and ignored, and criticisms of standing do not directly engage in the substance of debate. Thus, I suggested that we should be cautious about how we use and treat attacks on standing. I argued that the 'easy' criticism does not remove

standing, but I also highlighted what the 'easy' criticism does get right—namely, that there is a better speaker.[29]

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